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OLC 69-0069

24 January 1969

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Visit to Headquarters of Senator Allen J. Ellender (D., La.)

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1. In response to our invitation, Senator Ellender visited Headquarters on 24 January 1969 from 1300 to 1715 hours. During lunch, hosted by the Director and attended by Admiral Taylor, and Messrs. R. J. Smith, T. H. Karamessines, [] and John M. Maury, the Senator discussed in general terms his extensive travel in the Soviet Union during September-November 1968, and his views on Soviet/American relations. His main points included the following:

a. In comparison with his observations on earlier trips he is impressed with the improved living standards of the Soviet people, the increased efficiency in industry and, to a lesser extent, agriculture.

b. He finds Soviet plant managers and regional officials are enjoying increasing autonomy and freedom from centralized Moscow control in carrying out their responsibilities.

c. Particularly impressive is the fact that Soviet citizens now speak more freely and critically than in the past regarding some of their grievances and frustrations.

d. The Senator continues to be impressed by, and sympathetic with, the average Russian's fear and distrust [] He believes they deeply wish to be friendly with the U.S., but distrust our motives so long as we are committed to a policy of building up NATO []

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e. We cannot afford to continue the arms race, and some way must be found to improve our relations with the Soviet Union. The best way of accomplishing this is through increased cultural, scientific and technological contact with the Russian people.

f. Whatever may be the attitude of the Soviet leadership, the Russian people want to be friends with the U. S. , and with a little encouragement and reassurance from us, through friendly contact in peaceful pursuits, they can exert effective pressure upon their leaders for improved Soviet/American relations.

2. Many of the Senator's points were the same as those contained in the attached press item.

3. Following the luncheon, Senator Ellender met in the Director's conference room with [redacted] (OER), [redacted] (OCR), [redacted] (SB Division), and John M. Maury and [redacted] (OLC). He expanded at some length on the above-noted views regarding Soviet/American relations making the following points:

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a. One reason the Russians distrust us is because of what they perceive as the strong influence of our military establishment in our national policy. As soon as our diplomats say something nice to them some general sounds off with ominous threats and boasts about our strategic power.

b. We should do all we can to encourage Russian visitors to the U. S. , regardless of travel controls imposed on the Americans by the Soviets.

c. The Senator has an extremely low opinion of the State Department and cannot understand why both the Department and our Moscow Embassy have attempted to discourage his travels and contacts in the Soviet Union.

d. In talking to Soviet leaders the Senator has always been candid and often critical of their methods, especially in agriculture. They seemed to have appreciated this and in some cases they have apparently followed his advice.

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4. The Senator gave detailed descriptions of a number of industrial plants and newly built cities and institutions which he visited, many of which impressed him most favorably.

5. The Senator is convinced that the Russian people are becoming awakened and enlightened, are now "on the move," and will never tolerate a return to Stalinism.

6. In conclusion, the Senator said he would appreciate some statistics regarding the production of some of the major plants which he visited in order to confirm his understanding from his travels and serve as background for a report he is preparing. We undertook to fulfill this from open sources in the near future ([redacted] 25X1A [redacted] will prepare the material).

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7. The Senator was cordial, informal and articulate throughout. At no time did he bring up Agency matters, elicit the views of our personnel, or request information other than that noted above. In parting he expressed deep appreciation for the visit, urged us to call upon him whenever he could be of service, and apologized for taking so much of our time.

JOHN M. MAURY
Legislative Counsel

Attachment: Press Item

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